



GROWING A LOCAL CHURCH

BY GERALD ROWLANDS

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Reverend Gerald Rowlands of Queensland, Australia, has been a Minister of the Gospel for more than fifty years. During this time he has served in various roles such as a Pastor, Evangelist, Missionary, Christian Radio Teacher, Bible College Lecturer and Principal.



Gerald and his wife Elizabeth have traveled to some seventy nations of the world having lived for various periods of time in Africa, Asia and Israel.

Gerald is the founder and president of Church Planting International (CPI) and these notes form part of the CPI Training Course for prospective church planters. The CPI Course is being used effectively in some 23 nations around the world.

Gerald's CPI vision for training potential leaders in evangelism, church planting and pastoral ministry was birthed whilst Gerald and his wife were missionaries in Harare, Zimbabwe in 1980. During his first twelve months in Africa in 1975, Gerald had conducted numerous large crusades with many "conversions" recorded and he observed that it was relatively easy to draw a crowd and to see hundreds of people "make decisions" for Christ. The real challenge came after the crusade when those working with Gerald would seek to integrate the "converts" into the Body of Christ and walk in a truly Christian lifestyle. He had begun to realise how crucial it was to train local pastors in the principles of church growth and development. As a result, Gerald began to organise Pastors' Seminars in various parts of Africa to provide teaching and training. In 1979 when God led him to start a Bible College in what was then Rhodesia. At that time, Gerald was able to obtain an old guest house/motel and commenced a one year training course, the for-runner of the CPI Course.

During later visits to Zimbabwe, whilst conducting Church Growth seminars with national pastors, Gerald was able to introduce the CPI training program to many hundreds of ministers. As an ongoing result, the program has been adopted by some 27 denominations in Zimbabwe. All of these denominations and hundreds of graduates of Gerald's CPI Courses participated in a national decade long project called TARGET 2,000. Even now, despite many adverse circumstances within the nation, hundreds of new churches are started every year.

In 1992 Gerald received what he terms a "Macedonian Call" from Asia to place the CPI Course into some 30 new Bible Colleges in several parts of S.E. Asia. Gerald was based in Singapore at that time, and the colleges were in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines. It took a few months to accomplish the necessary editing and printing. After this he began to organise pastor's conferences at which his strategy could be shared and the materials made available to all pastors that desired them. Zimbabwe became a missions' focussed nation, sending church planters into several surrounding nations. There are also many churches using the CPI Course in Lesotho, Botswana, Zambia, Swaziland, South Africa, Malawi, Nigeria and Namibia.

Gerald's CPI Course has also been adopted in colleges in India, China, Israel, and in many parts of the former USSR including the Ukraine, Kazakstan and Siberia and Russia itself.

In 2006, Gerald was awarded the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) by the Australian government for services rendered in the emerging world and today Gerald still ministers via a regular radio program focusing on God's plan for Israel and the Church in the end times.

Growing a Local Church

A Church is NOT a Building or a Denomination.

A church is a company of people who meet regularly to

1. Worship God in Spirit and truth through Jesus Christ.
2. Edify, train, equip and motivate each other.
3. Evangelise their community and regions beyond.

A Statement of Purpose.

In the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus announced His statement of purpose.

Luke 4:18-21

18 *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden,*

19 *To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord."*

20 *And He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon Him.*

21 *And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."*

(NAS)

It answered three main questions

Who? Who He was. (Identity)

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What? What He planned to accomplish. (Vision)

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How? How He would fulfill it. (Strategy)

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Every church needs a statement of purpose that covers at least these three issues. I.e.

1. Who are we?

.....
.....
.....

2. What has God purposed for us to accomplish?

- a.....
- b.....
- c.....
- d.....

3. How will we accomplish that purpose?

- a.....
- b.....
- c.....
- d.....
- e.....
- f.....

Formulate a Statement of Purpose

If you already have one then review and update it.

Appoint a Task Force to review, update and formulate your current statement of purpose.

1. Who?

The Pastor, plus a small, representative group from the leadership of the church.

2. What?

Prayerfully and carefully consider the mandate and responsibility of their local church and the ultimate purpose for which they are called.

3. How?

- By meeting together regularly for prayer and consultation.
- By reviewing the history and development of the church.
- By assessing its accomplishments.
- By acknowledging shortcomings.
- By preparing in writing, a new statement of purpose that concisely declares their reason for being and the vision that God has for this church to fulfill.
- By making the written statement available to all church members and affiliates for prayerful review and acceptance

Set a time frame of three months to accomplish the above.

Communicate the Vision through:-

- 1. *Preaching*
- 2. *Teaching*
- 3. *Writing*
- 4. *Training*
- 5. *Formulate an appropriate Plan*

Some churches do not plan carefully

They believe it is not “spiritual” to plan.
 They believe that planning and preparation reveals a lack of faith.
 They believe that planning is a waste of precious time.
 They feel it is unwise to try to plan the future.

What planning accomplishes

It helps you to confirm where you are going.
 It determines how you will get there.
 It helps you to know when you have accomplished your purpose.

Vision is an understanding of where you are going.
Plans are the steps you will take to get there.

Formulate your Vision.

Why has God brought this church into being?
 What does He want to accomplish through it?
 What is God’s ultimate purpose for us? (Long term vision)
 What is God’s immediate purpose for us? (Short term vision)

This local church exists to:-

- a.....
- b.....
- c.....
- d.....

Determine your Plan

What specific steps must we take towards the fulfillment of this purpose?

- 1. Recognition of potential participants and leaders.
- 2. Recruitment of those persons.
- 3. Analysis of various roles and tasks involved.
- 4. Training and preparation of suitable personnel.

5. Delegation of personnel to appropriate tasks.
6. Authorization of team members to perform their specific tasks.
7. Regular team meetings to assess progress, or otherwise.
8. Adjustments to roles and tasks to increase productivity.
9. Rejoice together in accomplishments.
10. Rededication to the Vision.

Is your plan a SMART one?

Every plan should contain the following elements.

Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Responsible
Time oriented

Are your plans prophetic or pathetic?

II Ki 6:17

17 *And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.*
(NIV)

There is a spiritual realm that our natural eyes cannot see. Through earnest prayer and faith, the eyes of our understanding can be opened to see God's perfect plan.

"Prophetic planning" involves being able to discern the possibilities of the future. Prayerfully "looking into" the future, in the Spirit. Perceiving future developments and the opportunities inherent in them.

Prophetic planning must be :-

1. *Prayerfully approached*
2. *Prayer is verbally committing everything to God.*
3. *Prayer is thinking together with God, in His presence*
4. *Cautiously considered*
5. *Corporately confirmed*
6. *Responsibly undertaken*

Our vision and the steps to take us there must be:-

1. *Spiritually Conceived*
2. *Biblically Authenticated*
3. *Corporately Confirmed*
4. *Realistically Assessed*
5. *Prophetically Inclined*
6. *Faith Endowed*
7. *Responsibly Developed*

Prophetic action

Mark 11:24

24 *"Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask, when you pray, believe that you receive them, (act as though you have them) and you will have them. (NKJ)*

"Do today what you would need to do if your church were twice as large!"

e.g.

1. "Lift your service!" Be seeker sensitive, Increase the celebration factor. Preach dynamic messages to "more" people. Be culturally appropriate. Be contemporary. Be relevant.
2. Improve the music ministry
3. Conserve the harvest. New believers classes. Discipleship groups etc
4. Improve your administration.
5. Rent a larger building
6. Open more smaller venues
7. Train more workers

Edify the saints!

Eph 4:11-12

11 *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;*

12 *For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:*

The primary task of the ministers is to equip the saints that they may effectively do the work of ministry, i.e. edifying, (Building up in every way) the Body of Christ.

Eph 4:13-16

13 *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:*

14 *That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;*

15 *But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:*

16 *From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

(KJV)

The word for “perfecting”, (Eph 4:12) is *katartismos*.

katartismos denotes, "a fitting out of, or preparing fully," Eph. 4:12

Two of the analogies in which it is used are :-

1. The setting of broken bones. (So the body parts can work together properly)
2. The mending of broken nets. (So fish do not escape)

Edifying the saints involves

1. Developing spiritually mature and active church members.
2. Providing appropriate and adequate training opportunities.
3. Providing suitable ministry opportunities.
4. Lovingly supervising those activities.
5. Correcting and encouraging the workers.
6. Improving the image, activities and effectiveness of the local church.
7. Sharing Christ with our community.
8. Encouraging a missions vision and program.
9. Sharing the spoils of victory with them.
10. Growing up into Christ as a community, in all things.

Study your church's environment

In order to effectively serve the community, we must thoroughly understand it.

1. Reach out into the community. Begin with your neighbors!
2. Identify with your community.
3. Discover all you can about the surrounding population.
4. Recognize its ethnic roots.
5. Recognize its religious roots and culture.
6. Discover its aspirations.
7. Uncover its felt needs.
8. Empathize with its problems.
9. Try to predict its future.
10. Make provisions for future trends.

Imagine what Jesus would do

1. If Jesus came to your town!
2. Ask yourself, "If Jesus lived in my community, what would He concentrate on?"
3. Would He become a member of our church?
4. If not, why not?
5. If yes, why?
6. What would He inspire us to undertake?
7. Which people would He reach out to first?
8. What changes might He make in our church program?
9. Why don't we make those changes?

Identifying needs

Matt 9:36

36 But when Jesus saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. (KJV)

Jesus was extremely conscious of the surrounding multitudes and was filled with compassion for them as he recognized their needs.

Someone has correctly said that the best way to grow a church is to:-

1. "Find a need and begin to meet it!"
2. Study the needs and problems of the average people in your community.
3. Discover ways in which those needs might be met.
4. Ask God to show you and help you, to begin meeting those needs.
5. Try to see the people, "through the eyes of Jesus."
6. How does He see them? What does He want to do for them?
7. Look through the eyes of compassion.
8. Let compassion motivate you to do something for the needy.
9. Do what you can. Expect God to do what you cannot.
10. See the needs.
11. Have compassion on the people.

12. Pray for them earnestly.
13. Discover some solutions.
14. Go where they are.
15. Share the good news with them.
16. Help them find new hope and faith through Christ.

Training the potential leaders

Almost every congregation contains people with skills that are not being properly nor adequately used in God's service. They are the potential church leaders of the future.

1. Identify them
2. Talk with them personally.
3. Inspire them with the idea of serving God and His Kingdom.
4. Provide specific training.
5. Develop their latent skills.
6. Begin to use them in ministry activities.
7. Let them gain experience and confidence.
8. Let them gain credibility before the people.
9. Harness their skills and abilities fully.

Motivating the members

Every congregation has a percentage of "inactive members", people who are spectators rather than participators. For some of them their inactivity may be legitimate due to age or infirmity but there are many others who are not vitally active because :-

They have never been dynamically challenged.
They need to be convinced of their potential
They lack training in those areas in which they could be fruitful.

One of the ways to grow and strengthen a church is to activate more members.

The greater the ratio of active members the more work can be accomplished.
The wider the variety of gifts available.
More tasks and projects can be tackled.

Use the activated members

Once members have been freshly motivated and activated, they **MUST** be given tasks and responsibilities. Otherwise their activities will begin to languish again.

Use them to

1. Inspire other members towards activity through their testimonies.
2. Increase the educational potential of the church. E.g. Have them teach music lessons, conduct a choir, teach English as a second language, teach homecraft to young wives, teach Sunday school or children's church, lead a senior citizen's club, etc.

3. Undertake Christ's work in the community. Visiting the housebound, comforting and servicing the elderly, shopping for the infirm, visiting the hospitalized etc.
4. Voluntary workers at the church in various capacities.
5. Sharing Christ with unbelievers. Become a witnessing congregation.
6. Become involved in Missions projects.
7. Generally add breadth and depth to the church's activities.

Getting your priorities right

Unfortunately many churches major on minor issues and minor on major ones. They seem to have little idea of what is "strategic" and what is "non-strategic." No order of priorities has been properly established.

QUESTIONS

1. What is God's highest priority for our church?
2. What is His major concern?
3. What things are we doing that are not really important to God?
4. Are we fulfilling those things that are highest on His agenda?
5. How may we more adequately meet God's heart's desire?

DISCUSSIONS

1. Preach and teach on these issues.
2. Form discussion groups about them
3. Invite feedback from concerned parties.
4. Pray and discuss ways to improve our priorities.
5. Do something about the solutions. Endless talk without action discourages further participation.

Activating plans

“Until plans become activities they remain unfulfilled dreams.”

1. Purpose: What do we want to accomplish?

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2. Plan: How will be accomplish this?

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3. Who will make it happen?

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4. Where will it happen?

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5. When will it happen?

Start?
Finish?

6. What will be the ongoing results?

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7. What will be the ultimate conclusion?

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